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REGINALD POLE AND THOMAS CROMWELL:
AN EXAMINATION OF THE APOLOGIA AD CAROLUM
QUINTUM

THOMAS CROMWELL, beginning life as a merchant's clerk without money or influence, finally rose to the highest authority ever wielded by an English subject. The portraits of this remarkable man presented by historians have been most influenced by accounts of him left by two of his contemporaries. John Foxe put him into the *Book of Martyrs* as one who, having greatly served "the Gospel", died by the machinations of the enemies of truth. Reginald Pole, cardinal and archbishop of Canterbury, denounced him as a false counselor who helped the descent of a once innocent and pious king into tyranny, crime, and irreligion by flattering evil passions for his own gain.

The first of these judgments upon Cromwell became prevalent in England during the lifetime of his grandson and continued dominant for many generations. But the image of the martyr suggested by Foxe has been to a great extent replaced by the picture of an unscrupulous adventurer, loving chiefly the profits of power, the English disciple of Machiavelli, flattering the ideals of his age while he sneered at them, cruel, treacherous, and, even when he sought great ends, pursuing them by means baser than those generally used by his contemporaries. The traits of which this latter image are composed have been drawn from different sources, and the image therefore varies according to the emphasis which the writer may have chosen to lay upon this or that evil feature of the character of the earl of Essex. But about all these images of the unscrupulous adventurer type there is the same sinister atmosphere, and one who has read the account of Reginald Pole easily recognizes that the presence of that sinister atmosphere, throwing Cromwell into relief as the "arch knave" of his time, is due to its influence. This is the first record of a critical examination of this often-quoted account of Cromwell, and it gives the writer's reasons for concluding that Pole's sketch of Cromwell's character and motives is biased, improbable, and inaccurate.¹

Reginald Pole was of the blood royal, tracing descent from the

¹ To save space in the REVIEW many foot-notes to this article have been suppressed or condensed. It will be republished in full form.

duke of Clarence and from Warwick the kingmaker. He was sent to Oxford by royal bounty and at twenty-one went abroad to study with a royal pension of 100*l.*, equal in modern value to some \$5,000 or \$6,000. In addition he enjoyed the income of three ecclesiastical benefices which had been presented to him. He stayed five years abroad as a student and gained the friendship of some of the most distinguished scholars of the day. On his return to England he was one of the very few English noblemen (he had entered Magdalen College as a nobleman) who might justly be called highly educated. When Henry VIII. wanted to repudiate his wife, Pole, who had again gone abroad to study in Paris and still received his large pension as "king's scholar", was employed to collect opinions from the doctors of the university in favor of the invalidity of marriage to a brother's widow. Having successfully completed this task, which he so hated that he delegated its details to another, he returned to England by royal order in July, 1530, and shortly after was offered the archbishopric of York, rendered vacant by the death of Wolsey. Knowing that if he accepted it he must approve the repudiation of Catherine, Pole manfully refused, had a stormy interview with the king, and in 1532 obtained permission to go abroad. His pension was continued and he received another ecclesiastical benefice.

Two years after Pole left England, a demand came to him from the king that he should write his opinion on two points: Is marriage with a brother's widow permissible? Is the supremacy of the pope instituted by God? Pole's answer to these questions grew into a treatise entitled *In Defense of the Unity of the Church (Pro Ecclesiastica Unitatis Defensione)*. It consists of four books and expresses in places great affection for Henry and the grief Pole feels in being obliged to accuse him. The first book attacks the new royal title of supreme head of the church in England, and threatens Henry with the divine vengeance for the death of More and Fisher. The second defends the supreme authority of the pope, especially against the treatise of Sampson, which had been sent to him by the king. The third book exhorts Henry to prepare his mind to receive these arguments by laying aside his pride, and then proceeds in an ever-rising storm of invective to denounce his sins. Pole recites the facts in regard to Anne Boleyn and shows the injustice to Catherine, calls the king a robber and persecutor of the church, charges him with having wasted in senseless extravagances more taxes than his predecessors had collected in five hundred years, calls him guilty of an infamous incest, applies the strongest possible epithets to Anne Boleyn, and asks Henry if he thinks her daughter will be accepted as queen by the aristocratic families of England. He denounces

Henry for having slaughtered his nobles on slight pretenses and filled his court with wretched creatures. He calls up against him the blood of More, Fisher, and the Carthusian martyrs, saying that Nero and Domitian had not killed such men. He stigmatizes him as worse than the Tunisian pirates. In an apostrophe to Charles V. Pole begs him to defer the Turkish war in order to attack this new enemy worse than the Turk; for schism comes from the same source as paganism. Indeed this English Turkish seed has produced worse results than are to be seen among the real Turks. The real Turks tolerate the true religion, but this king defends his false religion with the sword. Therefore let the orthodox head of the Christian republic draw the sword against him. And, pointing out that the English people have before driven kings from the throne, Pole calls upon England to renew her ancient spirit, looking to the emperor for aid. Henry is a sacrilegious perjurer, who has broken his oaths and overthrown the foundations of his kingdom—justice, clemency, liberality. He has squandered her treasures on unworthy favorites and despoiled every condition of men. He has made sport of his nobility, plundered his clergy, never loved his people. He might be glad to have upon his tomb that epitaph of Sardanapalus which Aristotle said was fitter for a bull than for a man, that no room might be left for one not less true but more shameful; if, indeed, he might hope for any tomb, and not, in the words of Isaiah, be cast out from his sepulcher as a useless trunk, as a putrid corpse have no fellowship with his dead forefathers. His shame and ignominy are known to every one, and all powers sacred and secular are now leagued to cut off so pernicious a member from the body of Christendom. Whither can he flee for refuge? His riches stolen from the church will not help him. No tyrant had perished from poverty. Neither will the many adherents who now support him save him; Richard III. had been killed by his father in spite of a great army. Henry has but one refuge from unexampled dangers—penitence. And in the fourth book, asking pardon for his harsh words and “struggling with love and pity”, Pole exhorts the king to penitence; that is, to repent of his sins, return to the church, and ask for absolution, and “in the words of the prophet your iniquity will not be your ruin”.¹

Pole came to manhood at the crisis of a great conflict between two ideals for the European world. On the one hand there was the medieval ideal of Christendom as an organism with a visible head

¹ Pole's description of his own book, in *Epistolarum Reginaldi Poli S. R. E. Cardinalis et aliorum ad ipsum Collectio*, Brescia, 1744-1757, 5 volumes, I. 74. Pole's characterization of the third book is expanded here by illustrative instances drawn from the book itself. Pole says it is written “acerbe et vehementer”.

whose just sentence anticipated the sentence of the great day of judgment, made the rebel against divine commandment on whom it fell an outlaw in this world, and sent him to hell after death. On the other hand there was the forming ideal of Christendom as a series of distinct national institutions, each containing a divinely-constituted seat of authority that rightly rejected all outside interference in its own affairs, whose national church admitted no foreign authority to damn its apostate members, whose courts acknowledged no just power in any foreign tribunal to judge concerning the honor, the property, or the life of its citizens. These two ideals were to engage four generations in wars. The wars were complicated by theological opinions and religious beliefs, race hatred and class feeling, dynastic greed and personal ambition, but behind them all from the battle of Mühlberg to the peace of Westphalia there lay this central question, whether Christendom was or was not divinely constituted as an organic unity possessing somewhere, either in pope or council, or in both, a common, visible, and ultimate authority to define truth finally and judge righteousness for every nation and every man. The trumpet-call for that fight had come to Pole. Asked to say whether in the last analysis the supreme authority over England in questions involving a moral issue was at Rome or in London, taste, reason, and conscience led him to stand by the old ideal. He threw down the glove to Henry as a tyrant who had betrayed England because in withdrawing from the papal obedience he had broken the unity of Christendom, the God-given guaranty of saving truth and social order.

It is plain from Pole's letters at the time he was writing this treatise¹ that he thought himself to be doing some great service to the cause of the church. Just what service he hoped to do his cause by interpolating into his answer to Henry's questions a diatribe in a tone of such fierce invective that some of his intimate friends, ardent churchmen, advised the correction of the manuscript does not appear to a modern reader at first sight. A search through his writings makes it plain that Pole hoped, now that the passion for Anne Boleyn which had driven Henry into his impiety was cooled, to frighten him back to the path of righteousness by the threat of insurrection backed by a crusade against England.² It seems strange that Pole could have thought it so easy to frighten a Tudor, or could have imagined that the insensate pride backed by a morbid conscience that ruled Henry's character would submit to

¹ *Ibid.*, I. 427, 429, 438.

² *Ibid.*, I. 475; V. 155; also James Gairdner, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII.*, XII., Part I., No. 429; Part II., Nos. 107, 552.

private contumely or bow to public disgrace without a furious struggle, but it is quite plain that he did cherish this hope and sent his book to Henry in manuscript with this idea.¹ There was of course danger that the book might be used in producing the sort of civil war appealing to foreign aid which afterward desolated France and Germany. And Henry's effort to destroy the manuscript strengthened Pole's resolve to keep it hanging over his head like a sword of Damocles. But in the year 1539, during his absence from Rome, it was printed without his consent by friends to whom he had confided it and "not without the command of the pope".² His writings show that at several different times in his life he contemplated publishing it. He wrote three prefaces, all printed for the first time two hundred years after his death. The first one is entitled by the editor *Apologia Reginaldi Poli ad Carolum V. Cæsarem super quatuor Libris a se scriptis de Unitate Ecclesiæ*.³ The second preface is entitled *Proemium alterum ejusdem libri a Reginaldo Polo transmissi ad Regem Scotiæ*. Internal evidence shows that it was written not long after the fall of Cromwell, who was arrested June 10, 1540. The third, which breaks off abruptly, is entitled *Epistola ad Edwardum VI. Angliæ Regem de opere adversus Henricum patrem*, etc. This must have been written 1547-1553. In it Pole says he had heard that the Protestants intended to publish his treatise in defense of the unity of the church, and thought it better to do so himself. Schelhorn conjectures that he abandoned this intention on account of the death of Edward VI. and the accession of Mary.

In this third preface Pole says that he had been very unwilling to have the book circulated, but some copies had been taken without his knowledge from the places where they were stored and had come into the hands of many. The rarity of the first edition suggests the diligence of the author in preventing general circulation. The second edition was issued in 1555 by the Protestant apologist Vergerio, who said that Pole had concealed his book and given copies only to cardinals, popes, kings, bishops, princes. Pole's anxiety to prevent the general circulation of the book appears in his answer

¹ *Poli Epistolæ*, V. 61.

² *Epistola ad Edwardum VI.*, Section xlviii, *ibid.*, IV.

³ There are only four editions of the *Pro Ecclesiasticæ Unitatis Defensione*: (1) Rome, without date. (2) Strassburg, 1555. (3) Ingolstadt, 1587. (4) *Bibliotheca Maxima Pontificia*, Tome 18, 1698. Bibliographical manuals and catalogues assign the first to 1536 (*British Museum Catalogue*, 1535?; Brunel, *circa* 1536; Grässe, *vers* 1536; etc.). This assignment overlooks Pole's own account in the *Epistola ad Edwardum VI.*, cited above, which fixes the date as 1539. This date also agrees with the preface of the Strassburg edition, which says (1555), "This book has been published as I suppose about fifteen years". Schelhorn pointed out in 1737 in his *Amoenitates Historiæ Ecclesiasticæ et Literariæ*, Leipzig and Frankfort, 2 vols., 1737-1738, I., some of the reasons for assuming this date.

to the letter of Damianus a Goes (October 12, 1540),¹ who had heard of a printed copy and asked for one. Pole replies, "Up to this time I have published nothing, and how my writings have come into those hands where you say they have come I do not know. When I do publish I will satisfy your desire." Now the *Apologia* shows that at the end of 1538 or the beginning of 1539 Pole did intend to publish his book and send it to the emperor.² And in the *Proemium ad Regem Scotiæ* he says, just about the time he refused to send Damianus a Goes a copy, that he intends to send one to the king of Scotland,³ and publish it under his auspices. But, as copies of these prefaces do not seem to have been found in Spain or Scotland,⁴ it is to be assumed that Pole changed his mind.

He changed his mind so completely that in the last of these three prefaces, the letter to Edward VI., he asserted that though he had tried to force himself to yield to the arguments of his friends, he had never been willing to publish his book. The reasons for this mental struggle, which we perceive when we thus compare the contemporary record of his feelings made by his own hand with his subsequent memories, are not far to seek. Any one who will read all Pole's writings and set them against the background of the age he lived in can scarcely fail to see them.

The correspondence of Pole was printed in the middle of the eighteenth century, long after the close of the epoch of wars about religion. At that time a cardinal who fomented insurrection against a legitimate prince, or demanded war to drive him from his throne for religious causes, would have been regarded with disfavor by most orthodox churchmen and, under many popes, would have been reproved in Rome itself. The editor therefore shows in his notes a strong desire to clear Pole from the imputation of having been a rebel, even in the sense of those enemies of the church who had condemned him for treason. The attempt is a vain one, as is admitted by Pole's best biographer, Father Zimmerman,⁵ who points out that Pole believed the English people had the right to depose a king but not a bishop or a pope. But this anxiety of his editor, writing in a later age when all rebellion was apt to be regarded as sin, marks only the ultimate triumph of a sentiment which, even in Pole's day, exercised a strong influence on human action—the senti-

¹ *Poli Epistolæ*, III. 37.

² *Apologia*, Section vi, "omnia tunc scripta quæ nunc edo", *ibid.*, I.

³ *Ibid.*, I. 175, "In lucem exire volo".

⁴ The *Apologia* was printed by Quirini from a manuscript found in Germany: *Præfatio ad Monumenta Preliminaria*, *ibid.*, I.

⁵ Athanasius Zimmerman, S. J., *Kardinal Pole, sein Leben und seine Schriften*, Regensburg, 1893.

ment of patriotism, leading men to support, against every interference from men speaking other tongues, the action of the national government whose language they spoke. That sentiment, though not yet entirely prevalent anywhere, was perhaps stronger in England in the middle of the sixteenth century than in any other part of the European world, with the possible exception of Spain. Pole himself had formed his opinions and made his chief friendships among Italians, where the patriotic sentiment was and remained so weak that the destinies of Italy were swayed down to our own generation by foreign force. But there are plain indications that he had conquered it in his own mind only with pain, and we may well believe his assertion that he wrote with bitter tears¹ the book that made him an exile and a public enemy to England, in obedience to a conscience which bade him stand by the highest authority, established by God at Rome. But perhaps the struggle in his own mind suggested to him the strength of the sentiment he was opposing. Therefore, while he hoped at times for insurrection backed by the sword of France, or of Spain, or of both,² he shrank from appearing before the world as a denouncer of war. That would be to draw down upon himself and the church a renewal of the old reproach, most sharply expressed in Zwingli's epigram, that cardinals were appropriately clothed in red; their robes were stained with the blood they had caused to be shed. In saying this there is no intention of charging Pole with any extraordinary craftiness unexampled among his contemporaries. Pole, devoted to the institution he loved more than anything else in the world, was not superior to the temptations to which many men on either side of that great controversy whose issue was a war for life and death yielded, the temptation to be—sometimes without being quite conscious of it—less than frank if the cause might be helped by guile. Martin Luther, in the case of the bigamous marriage of the landgrave of Hesse, was willing to consent secretly to what he would not publicly approve, and Pole gave and shared secret counsels expressing hopes and intentions which he would not avow. This conclusion is derived from many instances in Pole's writings, even stronger in the sum than in any instance. It comes perhaps to its most acute point in these particular passages.

On February 16, 1537, he wrote to the royal council of England:³ "You say the pope is the king's enemy, to which I reply thus: I

¹ *Epistola ad Edwardum VI.*, Section xl, *Poli Epistolæ*, IV.

² This is contrary to the opinion of several authoritative writers, but the references given below prove it beyond doubt.

³ *Poli Epistolæ*, I. 185. Everything included in Pole's *Epistles* is either Latin or Italian. The passages are Englished by the writer.

dare to affirm of this pope, whose acts I see, whose talk I often hear, that I have never heard of a single act or word of his, either concerning the king or concerning those who are in his kingdom, which did not show the affection of a father, and that indeed the most indulgent father toward his son or the affection of a most loving pastor toward his flock." This solemn asseveration was written on the eve¹ of Pole's departure on a papal mission whose object, as the pope told the Spanish ambassador, who repeated it to his master, was to aid the northern insurrection in England.² Pole must of course have known of this object in order to carry it out. That he did know of it is shown positively by his letters to the pope on starting from Rome and on returning.³

Now the motives that caused Pole to deny plans for promoting insurrection of which he was an instrument would also be active in leading him after hesitation to suppress his book. For that book, as has already been said, he wrote three prefaces. The first, entitled the *Apologia*, contains the famous picture of Thomas Cromwell. In style and form it is not a preface but an oration about two and a half times as long as this article, arranged with art and most rhetorically written. Section viii. shows that it was begun after the launching of the papal bull which commanded all faithful Christians to deprive Henry of his crown, and either just before or during Pole's journey to Spain on a mission to Charles V. begun December 27, 1538. A passage about the middle of the *Apologia* shows, however, that it could not have been finished at that time; for the writer speaks of having seen "per hos dies" the book which set forth the reasons the English council gave for the attainder or execution of three members of Pole's family.⁴

That book was not ready for distribution on January 9, 1539,⁵ and what must have been one of the first copies distributed was sent to France by the French ambassador on January 16.⁵ Pole could not therefore have seen the book before he passed through south France (he was at Avignon January 22). It is not probable that he saw it then, for that supposition implies that he was writing during the rapid journey⁶ to Toledo, which he reached on February 13. It is most probable that after returning from Toledo, some time between the end of March and the end of September, 1539, he took

¹ Although unwell, he was at Verona on February 28, 1537.

² *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII.*, XII., Part I., No. 123, confirmed by *ibid.*, Nos. 463, 625, 1141.

³ *Poli Epistolæ*, II. cclxxiv, 46.

⁴ *An invective agenste the great and detestible vice of treason wherein the secret practices and traitorous workings of them that suffered of late are disclosed*, London, 1539.

⁵ *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII.*, XIV., Part I., Nos. 37, 72.

⁶ *Ibid.*, No. 126.

up and finished the *Apologia*, which he certainly began when he was looking forward to seeing the emperor as the representative of the pope. It was written under great disappointment, for Pole had hoped that Henry would be forced back to the church by the insurrection of the North and by the invasion which, as he had served notice in the manuscript of the *Pro Unitatis Defensione*, he would invoke if the king did not yield to his prophetic denunciations of sin and exhortations to repentance.

He had now come to believe that his hopes of frightening and persuading Henry to repent and return to the church had been blocked first by the devil and second by an emissary of the devil, Thomas Cromwell. He might well have hated and attacked Cromwell bitterly on personal grounds, for Cromwell had been the chief agent in executing his brother, Lord Montague, and condemning his mother, the countess of Salisbury, for treason. But it is not to be assumed that the *Apologia* was written out of personal revenge. Its motive is a burning zeal to speak as the exponent of God's justice in denouncing the enemies of humanity and religion.¹ For Pole now saw plainly what was the undoubted fact, that this man was the chief influence in frustrating the sacred hopes with which he had sailed on his mission (1537) to aid the English rebellion in defense of the Catholic church, and on his other mission to induce the emperor to force Henry back to obedience to the vicar of Christ, which had just proved a failure. Pole, therefore, joins Cromwell to Henry as the object of invective in the name of God and the church.

Let us now consider the historic value of this document, as a chief source for gaining a true impression of the work and character of Thomas Cromwell. In the first place, it must be noted that Cromwell was a man whose character and motives Pole could have appreciated, even under circumstances the most favorable to fair judgment, only imperfectly. Two more antipathetic personages could hardly be imagined. Pole was a man of the highest aristocratic lineage. Cromwell, as Pole is careful to point out, had risen from the common people. Cromwell's intelligence was a product of the Renaissance training. Pole, though a correspondent of Erasmus and a friend of Bembo, was always too much of a theologian of the old type to be really a man of the new learning.² Cromwell expelled scholasticism from Oxford and made provision for the effective teaching of Greek.³ When Pole became the first subject

¹ That the *Apologia* was not written merely as a private letter to the emperor is shown by its whole tone and by the end of Section viii: "Necessarium si cupimus multitudini prodesse hoc prius ostendere".

² See his correspondence with Sadoleto.

³ *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII.*, IX. Nos. 312, 350.

in England, he deplored the cessation of scholastic learning and changed the lectureship in Hebrew to one on the master of the sentences.¹ Pole was a believer in the old ideal liberties of a semi-feudal commonwealth defended by the two privileged classes of nobles and clergy.² Cromwell was ruthlessly smashing the remanent power of feudalism as a dangerous anachronism, breaking the political influence of the lay lords, destroying that of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and making England a nation centered around an absolute throne resting on the consent of the middle classes.³

Pole belonged to an era that was past. Cromwell was a man of an era to come, who had been a chief instrument in breaking that ancient divine institution for which Pole had sacrificed everything in the world. To look for a judicious estimate of the character and aims of Abraham Lincoln in a letter of Jefferson Davis written in the midst of the Civil War to gain the recognition of the Confederacy from some foreign government would be far wiser than to approach without caution the *Apologia* which Pole addressed to Charles V. and confidently rely on finding in it a fair and final judgment on Thomas Cromwell. This necessary caution is increased when we understand the purpose and feel the tone of the *Apologia*.

Pole's correspondence is not a common book, and the calendar of the *Apologia* to Charles V. printed in the *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII.* is so condensed that it gives no hint of the violent polemic tone of the writing. Nor does the description of Zimmerman enable the reader to form any idea of it. A few extracts from more characteristic⁴ passages will suggest how little the historic and how entirely the polemic spirit ruled the mind of its author when it poured from his indignant soul against the enemies of God and His church. The molder of the German tongue could never have forced his diction, virile to coarseness, into the artificial rhetoric of Pole's sixteenth-century Ciceronian, but not Martin Luther himself

¹ *Poli Epistola*, V. 47, 84.

² Thomas Starkey, Dialogue between Pole and Lupset, in *England in the Reign of King Henry VIII.*, edited by J. M. Cowper for The Early English Text Society, London, 1871. This is probably in accord with the general drift of Pole's views, and it agrees with the political allusions of his letters.

³ The Tudors had no standing army. They destroyed the power of the nobility and clergy. By repeated legislation Henry VIII. tried to make the people keep and practise arms. If his throne was not in the last analysis supported by the loyalty of the middle classes, what kept it from falling under the repeated attacks made upon it?

⁴ The *Apologia* contains passages expressing the great sorrow it gives Pole to be compelled to denounce Henry. Such expressions are usual in the most comminatory writings of popes, cardinals, or bishops. But they are not characteristic of the *Apologia*. It is more denunciatory than that third book of the *Pro Unitatis Defensione*, which Pole himself said was written "acerbe et vehementer", "aspere". Regretful expressions are not applied to Cromwell at all.

could write a polemic which in effect was more violent than the *Apologia*. The object of the treatise is to show that Henry is Antichrist, confirmed in his subjection to Satan by Cromwell, Satan's emissary, and its rhetorical climax is an appeal to the faithful for a holy war to free the world of his tyranny and impiety. Did Moses, Pole asks, have a juster reason for calling upon the Israelites to wipe out the crime of the worshipers of the golden calf even in the blood of brethren and friends than the vicar of Christ has to call to all the pious in view of the worse crimes of Henry, Who is on the Lord's side let him gird his sword on his thigh? If it was said to the tribe of Levi, Blessed are ye of the Lord, ye who have consecrated your hands in the blood of your relatives, how much greater blessing will they deserve who at the call of the vicar of God consecrate their hands in the blood of those who have inflicted such slaughter joined with ignominy on the people of God? "Can it be the chiefs of the tribes of the people of God to whom I, one of those Levites, am sent to hold up that glorious and most pious example of the tribe of Levi" will fail to listen to me?

Henry is the vicar of the devil. Henry is worse than Nero, crueller than the Turk. "Unless Christian princes and peoples unite against him, God will give them no victory over the Turk." Strengthened by God's justice to the office of a prophet, Pole announces that, if they neglect this worst enemy of God, "He will not only not roll back the Turkish charge, but will make it prevail in the day of battle."

Henry has expressed the very form of the rule of Antichrist as foretold in Scripture as it has never been expressed before. Pole would gladly give his body to be burned to save him, but the king is so lost that his conversion would be a miracle never before heard of, "that one not four days dead but long dead should be restored to life and from that hell into which he descended brought back living to the upper regions". An emissary of Satan had confirmed Henry in evil and led him to set himself up in the place of God. His real name was that of the demon by whose impulse he worked. But if we begin with that human name he received from his family before "he fell into the hands of devils and degenerated into their nature", we find it to be Cromwell. A man of no lineage, whose father, they say, earned his living in a little village by fulling cloth, he was like the man in the tombs possessed by a legion of devils—nay worse; "For if a legion of devils drove a herd of swine into the sea, how many legions, or rather how many armies of devils, must be in this Cromwell who has thrust such vast numbers of men down to hell?" No heretic, no schismatic had ever been so bad as

Cromwell. They had cast crowds of men into the sea of death. But Cromwell had gone farther and destroyed the very foundation of righteousness, committing the sin for which Lucifer was cast into the abyss, the assertion that the norm of right and wrong is man's own will. Pole says that he is not talking mystically but in a common-sense way. He can prove what the commands of Satan brought by Cromwell to the king were.

The greater part of his proof is as follows: He had had only one conversation with Cromwell,¹ and that was ten years before, soon after his own return from Italy (1528), when Cromwell was a "sycophant" of Wolsey's. Cromwell was trying, as the duke of Norfolk tried, to persuade Pole (see Pole's letter to Edward VI.) not to oppose the king. The keen man of the world doubtless told the young student of the cloisters things about kings' courts and the sort of arguments to use at them which were true enough, and which Pole did not know, or else he would not have thought it possible to frighten Henry by the *Pro Unitatis Defensione* or raise a crusade against him by the *Apologia*. More in the *Utopia* made to Raphael some excellent remarks about not being a philosopher in the councils of princes, which might easily have been distorted by an enemy who repeated them after the lapse of ten years. And we may well believe that there was more cynical worldly wisdom than piety in Cromwell's talk, without turning his advice into that systematic attack upon the very foundations of morality which Pole says it was, as his judgment of Cromwell's devilish work molded his memories of a single talk across the lapse of years. And we may easily believe that in rejecting the temptation to justify the cruel injustice of Henry's divorce Pole chose the better part, without seeing in Cromwell the diabolic personage which Pole makes him appear in this trumpet-call to sacred war against him.

Pole says that at the end of the conversation Cromwell offered to lend him a book on statecraft if he would read it. It is expressly stated that Cromwell did not mention its name or send it. But Pole "took no less care to get it by inquiring from those who knew the bent of his studies than men take to intercept the despatches of a hostile general to know his plans". It was the *Prince* of Machiavelli, and as soon as Pole began to read he saw that

¹ Pole says (*Apologia*, 132), "hoc fateor, me publice illum loquentum nunquam audivisse, privatim autem semel et iterum, nunquam amplius". This, as it stands, means twice. But a few lines farther down on the same page Pole contradicts it by saying "facile ex illo uno congressu et colloquio perspiciebam"; and in the next line, "Talem enim futuram ille uno sermone docuit". The only explanation I can suggest is to drop the editor's comma after *iterum* and take the phrase *iterum nunquam amplius* as loose Latin for "never again". The *Apologia* needs the file in many places, as its editor Quirini remarks.

"though a man's name was on the title-page, the book was written by the finger of Satan even as the Holy Scriptures are said to be written by the finger of God". And this fact, that Cromwell once offered to lend him a book that had just appeared, and that he "afterward" found out that Cromwell read and approved Machiavelli's *Prince*, is Pole's proof that Cromwell is possessed of an army of devils, an emissary of Satan to the king. Then he proceeds to tell also how Cromwell accomplished his mission from Satan.

Pole heard it from one who was present that on a certain occasion the king with a great sigh said that, if he had known how difficult the divorce was, he would never have begun it. From this mood of hesitancy he was brought by Cromwell; and Pole gives a long speech of over 1,500 words made by Cromwell to the king. Pole says that he does not know that he has the order of this speech correct, for he was not present, but he can affirm that there is in it nothing which he has not heard, either from the speaker himself or from those who were the sharers of his counsel. Now when we remember that ten years had elapsed since the speech which Pole did not hear was supposed to be delivered, when we notice that he never referred to either conversation or speech in his writings during the interval, and perceive the unmistakable traces of Pole's reading of Machiavelli all through his version of Cromwell's supposed speech to the king, the conclusion seems inevitable that it was largely constructed under the predominant influence of Pole's conviction that the diabolic activity of Henry's government could best be accounted for by the belief that its chief councilor was the first man to introduce into English statecraft the principles of that Satan's Bible *Il Principe*.

The reasons which Pole alleges for seeking some direct diabolic influence to account for Henry's conduct should first be noticed. Pole was in no mood to recall the evils connected with the veneration of relics and pilgrimages, animadverted upon for more than a generation past by both schismatics and those who stood by the orthodox church (it will be sufficient to recall the words of Erasmus) and to him the wickedest things ever done by any tyrant in the history of the world were the destruction of the shrine of Saint Thomas à Becket and the dishonoring of his bones, and the destruction of the tomb of Saint Augustine.¹ To one who shares this opinion it may perhaps appear that the government of England under Cromwell's influence was so uniquely and diabolically wicked that we must assume for it some peculiar relation to principles ex-

¹ These were deeds "quæ nullus unquam apostata tentavit unquam nullus hereticus est conatus", *ibid.*, 110.

plicitly denying all the foundations of right and wrong. To one who does not share this view of the *unexampled* atrocity of the destruction of a saint's shrines and the brutal treatment of relics, the assumption that the government of England between 1531 and 1538 so incomparably exceeded in craft or cruelty or despotism the reigns of Henry's contemporaries, men like Ferdinand of Spain, Charles V., Pope Clement VII., or Francis I., that it must of necessity have been guided by some uniquely immoral principles, is scarcely worthy of serious discussion.

Moreover, if Cromwell had owned a manuscript of the *Prince* in 1528—and, as we shall see, there is very strong reason for believing that he did not see the *Prince* until ten years later—there would have been nothing especially significant about that fact. The *Prince* was first printed in 1532 at Rome, by the same printer who printed Pole's book, and under the favor and sanction of the pope,¹ who granted him a ten-years' copyright. It was then considered a perfectly proper book for a pious man to own. By 1554 some dozen editions had appeared, and the book was read by every one who read widely in politics at all. Sir Thomas Smith, a younger contemporary of Cromwell, and one of the fairest statesmen of his times, had it in his library of history and politics, of which a catalogue has survived. The possession of the *Prince* between 1528 and 1540 would suggest no presumption whatever that its owner was a singularly sinister personage; "it is known that Charles V.", for whom Pole wrote the *Apologia*, "carefully studied it, that his son and courtiers perused it".²

That Cromwell became, as Pole says, Henry's chief counselor in the process of breaking allegiance to Rome, destroying the political power of the clergy, and suppressing the monasteries is true enough. In carrying out this plan he used the ruthless and crafty methods common to the politics of the century; the condition of his power was willingness to serve the caprices of a despot whose morbid conscience gave to his evil deeds a singular stamp, which has thrown them into high relief among the many tyrannical acts of the age. But that Cromwell owed his policy or methods to the teachings of Machiavelli is in itself highly improbable. Machiavelli did not create, he only interpreted the political methods of his age. Pole's direct proof that Cromwell was an emissary of the devil is, to any one who knows that generation of the sixteenth century, entirely valueless. And it must be remembered that he himself, presumably

¹ See G. Amico, *La Vita di N. Machiavelli*, Florence, 1875, 415.

² Pasquale Villari, *Niccolò Machiavelli*, Milan, 1895-1897, Volume II., Libro Secondo, Cap. v., 421, chapter on the critics of the *Prince*.

with the advice of his friends, never gave the *Apologia* to the emperor, for whom he wrote it, nor to the world.

In addition to these considerations there are the following detailed reasons to show that Pole's account of Cromwell as the messenger of Satan, drawing his policy from Satan's Bible, is untrustworthy: First we should observe that Pole, like most men, was capable of making mistakes in representing long afterward what he had felt at a certain time and, in regard to small things, in relating what he had done. For example, the letter to Edward VI, (1547-1553), denying the charge that he had undertaken his mission in 1539 to induce kings to take arms against Henry, asserts that he merely intended to persuade the emperor and the French king to use the reasoning of love and friendship with Henry. He never wished that they should attack him by force of arms. He says he will not deny that he advised, in case love and kindness failed, that threats should be added, and that as a last extreme remedy they should declare a commercial blockade.¹ Now this does not necessarily involve any conscious misrepresentation of facts. But we may confidently affirm that it is in effect an entire misstatement. Pole was directed by the pope to carry the bull of excommunication to Charles and ask his aid in its execution, so far at least as by recalling his ambassadors and forbidding all trade with England.² This of course was only an indirect way of using force, because we know from Pole's secretary that it was hoped by cutting England from all communication with Christendom to cause such misery that the people would rise in rebellion against Henry.³ But this consideration by no means measures the error of Pole's recollection. Section viii. of the *Apologia* shows that the account Pole gave after 1547 of his motives and feelings in 1539 is explicitly contrary to fact. That section, written when he was about to undertake his mission, but not published until two hundred years afterward, plainly states that the motive of his mission is to persuade the emperor to postpone the Turkish war and turn his arms against England. Moreover we know that this is what Pole tried to persuade the emperor to do; for the following despatch of Mocenigo, the Venetian ambassador, records the account the emperor gave, soon after Pole left him, of his interview with Pole:⁴

¹ *Epistola ad Edwardum VI.*, xlv, *Poli Epistolæ*, IV.

² Pope Paul III. to Charles V., January 7, 1540, *Calendar of State Papers, Spanish*, VI., Part I., 97.

³ Beccatelli's *Life of Pole*, 17, in *Poli Epistolæ*, I. Beccatelli was Pole's secretary and intimate companion.

⁴ Quoted and summarized in *The Emperor Charles V.*, by Edward Armstrong, M. A. (Macmillan, 1902), II. 21.

On the one hand it seems that the Cardinal wishes me to forbid trade with this king of England as a sort of warning, on the other he appears to want me to make war on him: my answer is that I know full well what war means — that it is easy to begin and not so easy to end: . . . if His Holiness is counselling such enterprises, it is because he is far distant from the said king; were he as near him as I am, his advice might be very different.

Charles reminded Pole that at Nice the pope had impressed upon him that the crusade was so important that all other enterprises must be postponed for this; he could not imagine why His Holiness had changed his mind. Pole urged that the English evil was intrinsic, the Turkish extrinsic,¹ and demanded that the intrinsic danger should receive the first attention. "But", replied the emperor, "if the Turk came to Italy and right up to Ancona, as come he undoubtedly would, would His Holiness regard that as an extrinsic evil?" Thus the emperor's account of what Pole said on his mission agrees entirely with Pole's own record in the *Apologia* of his feelings just before and after that mission, and shows that Pole's account of that mission written years afterward to Edward VI. was so incomplete as to be entirely misleading.

It may also be shown in the same connection that Pole is capable, as most men are, not only of making mistakes as to the main meaning of what he felt and said in time past, but also capable of making mistakes in telling what he did long ago. He writes in the *Epistola ad Edwardum VI.* that when his friends printed his *Pro Ecclesiastica Unitatis Defensione* without his consent during his absence from Rome in 1539, they arranged it in several books, "which I never had done".² But in the first part of the *Apologia*, composed on the eve of that absence, as the eighth section shows beyond question, he writes, "I have divided the work into four books", and he then describes them one by one.

Now, if Pole's memories about his feelings and acts were thus obscured and confused³ in the interval between the writing of the *Apologia* (1539) and the *Epistola* (reign of Edward VI., 1547-1553), it is evident that his memories about his feelings and acts as regards Cromwell might become confused in the interval between

¹ The fatuousness of this argument, exposed by the humorous reply of the emperor, is one of several indications that might be adduced to show how much Pole needed Cromwell's advice not to indulge in scholastic discussion at princes' councils

² *Epistola ad Edwardum VI.*, Section xlviii, *Poli Epistolæ*, IV.

³ The suggestion which Pole's editor, Quirini, seems to imply (*Monumenta Præliminaria*, *ibid.*, I. lxxxvii) does not stand examination. If it did, it would free Pole from this mistake in memory only by involving him in another. Even taking Quirini's improbable suggestion, Pole's own writings show that he was mistaken either in the statement that he had never divided his treatise into four books or in the statement that he could never write a preface for the published work.

1528 and 1539. That they did so become confused is plainly shown by what he wrote in this interval. It is impossible to compare carefully the *Apologia* with the *Pro Unitatis Defensione* and Pole's letters between 1532 and 1539, without a suspicion rising almost to certainty that in this elaborate rhetorical invective against Cromwell he is telescoping in a very misleading way events long separated. In order to prove that Cromwell is a devil ("degeneravit in naturam dæmonum"), Pole tells the emperor that long ago he had a talk with Cromwell about the duty of a prudent counselor with his prince. At the end of it Cromwell offered to lend him a book on the subject written by a certain acute modern of experience. The subject of the conversation and the offer to lend him the book are facts that would be apt to remain in a man's mind. There is not the smallest reason to accuse Pole of inventing them.

There are, however, very strong reasons for doubting that the unnamed book which Cromwell offered to lend Pole was Machiavelli's *Prince*. But does not Pole say that Cromwell offered to lend him Machiavelli's *Prince*? He says nothing of the kind. Cromwell offered to lend him a book which he did not name or send. But "afterward" Pole found out from Cromwell's friends that Cromwell admired Machiavelli's *Prince*, and he concluded that it was the book Cromwell had so much praised. How long "afterward"? There are the very strongest reasons for believing that it was not before 1537, conjectural reasons for believing that it was during 1538.

Before examining these reasons, let us notice the very good ground for believing that the unnamed book which Cromwell offered to lend Pole in 1528 or 1529 was not the *Prince* of Machiavelli at all, but the *Courtier* of Castiglione: (1) The *Prince* was not printed in 1529; the first edition was of May, 1532. This does not, as some writers have thought, render it impossible for Cromwell to have had it, but it makes it improbable. Manuscripts of the *Prince* existed, but they were not very plentiful. (2) There is strong positive reason (to be afterward given) to believe that Cromwell did not see the *Prince* until long afterward, when a friend sent him a copy. (3) The *Courtier*, on the other hand, was printed in April, 1528, and was most widely read. In ten years it was published in seventeen editions and translated into Spanish and French. (4) We know that Cromwell had a copy from the following letter written to him in the summer of 1530 by Edward Bonner, afterward bishop of London:

Right worshipfull, in my veray hartiest maner I commende me to you. And wher ye willing to make me a good Ytalion promised unto

me, longe agon, the Triumphes of Petrarche in the Ytalion tonge. I hartely pray you at this tyme by this beyrer, Mr. Augustine his seruant, to sende me the said Boke with some other at your deuotion; and especially, if it please you, the boke called Cortigiano in Ytalion, etc.¹

(5) The *Prince* has nothing whatever to say about the subject on which Cromwell was talking to Pole—the attitude of a prudent counselor toward his prince.² Pole's recollections of this long-past conversation are not to be assumed as reliable in detail. He would not write it down, for in 1528 Cromwell was a man of no importance. But he would probably remember the subject and the general drift of the talk. This is his recollection:

Pole said in opening, "In my judgment this belongs to the duty of a counselor, not to dissent from those honest and useful things which natural law and the writings of pious and learned men teach". Cromwell replied that scholastic discussion differs from a king's council; that much depends on when, where, to whom, and by whom a thing is said; and that it is the part of a prudent and experienced man to know this. In this matter the learned, who lack experience, often make mistakes, and, because of their abruptness, cause the hatred of princes, because they do not know how to accommodate themselves and their remarks to place, time, and person. Hence, those who come fresh from schools to princely councils, for lack of experience, often run on the rock; which he confirmed with some examples of those who because they held too firmly to scholastic opinions were hated by princes and were not only useless but actually pernicious as counselors. Hence he summed up his opinion about the duty of a prudent counselor that the first part of it is to study the will of his prince.

(6) The *Courtier* is written about the character of princes' friends and the relation of counselors to their sovereigns. It is all about the duty of a prudent counselor. And the following passages are curiously apposite to the advice which Pole says Cromwell gave him:

Nor do I think that Aristotle and Plato would have scorned the name of perfect Courtier, for we clearly see that they performed the works of Courtiership and wrought to this end,—the one with Alexander the Great, the other with the kings of Sicily. And since the office of a good Courtier is to know the prince's character and inclinations, and thus to enter tactfully into his favour according to need and opportunity, as we have said, by those ways that afford safe access, and then to lead him towards virtue,—Aristotle so well knew the character of Alexander, and tactfully fostered it so well, that he was loved and honoured more than a father by Alexander. . . . And of these achievements of Alexander the author was Aristotle, using the means of a good Courtier: which Callis-

¹ Sir Henry Ellis, *Original Letters*, Third Series, London, 1846, II. 178.

² *Poli Epistolæ*, I. 133.

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thenes knew not how to do, although Aristotle showed him; for in his wish to be a pure philosopher and austere minister of naked truth, without mingling Courtiership therewith, he lost his life and brought not help but rather infamy to Alexander.¹

This very close parallel strongly suggests that the unnamed book was the *Courtier* and not the *Prince*.

But, whether this book that Cromwell offered to lend was the *Courtier* or not, there is the strongest reason for believing that Pole did not think it was the *Prince* till a long time "afterward". He describes how he "sought out this book as carefully as one seeks out the despatches of an enemy to know his plans". He certainly did not do this immediately, for in 1528 (or 1529), when this talk took place, Cromwell was of no importance whatever in the English state. Pole himself describes him as a man of no family, a mere hanger-on of Wolsey. Nor did he rise at all until in the beginning of 1531 he became a member of the royal council. It is hard to understand why, previous to that time, Pole could possibly have been inclined to seek out, "as the despatches of an enemy's general", the book Cromwell had offered to lend. That he did so in 1531 is very improbable for the following reasons: Pole gives, as a proof of his accuracy in reporting this talk with Cromwell, that as soon as he saw Cromwell growing in authority with the king, he left England, fearing what would happen "when he held the helm of state". In regard to this one point of leaving England, there is very strong reason to believe Pole mistaken in his memories of his motives seven years before he wrote. He left England in January, 1532, and he had been trying to obtain permission to leave for some time.² In 1531, when he must have begun to ask license to go to Paris, it would have been very difficult for any one to foresee Cromwell's future great weight in the English councils of state. He was not important enough to be even mentioned in the despatches of the imperial ambassador until April 16, 1533, when he is spoken of briefly as "Cromwell, who is powerful with the King".³ Norfolk and the other kindred of Anne Boleyn were in power at the time Pole left England. We have another account of the reason for Pole's leaving England besides that given here. It does not make any mention of Cromwell. Beccatelli, Pole's intimate friend, who wrote his life, says that he left England because of the fury of the king in an interview he had with him, when the king was so enraged at Pole that he gripped the hilt of his dagger as if to use it ("ut

¹ Quoted after L. E. Opdycke's translation, New York, 1903, 284-285.

² Despatch of imperial ambassador Chapuys to Charles V., *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII.*, V., No. 737; *Epistola ad Edwardum VI.*, Section xi, *Poli Epistolæ*, IV.

³ *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII.*, VI., No. 351.

ipse mihi Polus narravit"). "Moved by this offense of the king, Pole felt he ought to make every effort to leave England."¹

This lacuna between 1528 and 1533 is filled up by Pole with the account of the long oration of Cromwell to the king alluded to on page 708. The implication that this hypothetical oration made Cromwell at a stroke chief councilor of the king has been accepted without examination. But when tested by facts, by the *State Papers*, and by Pole's own writings, it appears very highly improbable. Pole was out of England from October, 1529, to July, 1530. On his return he lived in retirement. How did Pole find out that Cromwell was the real power behind the throne, when the Spanish ambassador, whose business it was to report the intrigues of the court, and who was in constant communication with the queen and her friends, had no suspicion that Cromwell was of any determining importance until 1533? The straightforward account of Cromwell's rise to power given by Cavendish² agrees with all the facts and presents no mysteries. Cavendish, Wolsey's gentleman usher, saw Cromwell constantly and talked with him just before he rode up to court to see the king on Wolsey's tangled affairs and, as he said in his favorite phrase, "to make or mar"; Cavendish did not approve of Cromwell's policy and therefore could have had no prejudice in his favor. Moreover, as the account of Cromwell's rise comes as a side issue into Cavendish's account of Wolsey's life, there was no motive, conscious or unconscious, for distortion. Pole had spoken to Cromwell but once in his life. His account is in a highly rhetorical polemic. The hypothetical conversation of Cromwell with the king is necessary to his argument that Henry is Antichrist inspired by the devil. Tried by every possible test for determining the value of historic evidence, the account of Cromwell's entry into the king's council given by Cavendish is far more trustworthy than the account of Pole. Cavendish says that Cromwell, in settling Wolsey's affairs, saw the king several times and impressed him by witty "demeanour" and capacity for business. The king took him into his service and made him a royal councilor. The *State Papers* show that his influence there was at first very small. He rose by capacity. In the summer of 1532 he was overwhelmed with business. In the fall he was the only commoner appointed to go with the king to France. In 1533 his power with the king was apparent to the Spanish ambassador.

Not only are there these reasons for doubting the accuracy of Pole's memory that he left England because of Cromwell's rise to

¹ *Vita*, vi and vii, *Poli Epistolæ*, I.

² George Cavendish, *Life of Cardinal Wolsey*, first printed in London, 1641.

power, but Pole's letters show unmistakably that, nearly five years after he left England, he did not regard Cromwell as possessed by the devil. Therefore he had not yet "searched out" the book that Cromwell offered to loan him and found it to be the *Prince*, for he says, "I had hardly begun to read it before I saw it was written by the hand of Satan". Four years after leaving England, Pole wrote to Cromwell as follows:

"In my heartiest manner I commend me unto you". He says he is glad to hear through his brother of Cromwell's friendly words in assuring him of the continuance of the king's gracious favor, which "I cannot but accept for a great singular pleasure and acknowledge the same for such a benefit as few of my friends could a given beside". He desires Cromwell to do him "a yet greater pleasure": "That it may please you to ascertain his Highness of my serviceable and prompt mind to do him service at all times wherein I can say no more but pray Almighty God to send me some good opportunity, who ever have you in his blessed keeping". He signs himself "Your assuredly bound Raynold Pole".¹

Pole could not have written this letter to a man he thought was governing England by Satan's Bible. More than a year later (February, 1537) Pole still had not searched out this Satanic book, for at that time Michael Throgmorton, a gentleman usher of the cardinal, writes to his friend Richard Morison "in the house of my Lord Privy Seal" (Cromwell) a long letter,¹ in which he "faithfully assures" Morison that Pole bears Cromwell "hearty affection which after long communication by entire and hearty fashion of speaking he manifestly declared seeing that what chance soever should happen he might be assuring of him to his power to shew him that friendly heart and pleasure that he, by his kindness and goodness showed toward him, hath deserved, with further words to the same tenor that at this time I will not rehearse. But briefly to conclude I think surely my Lord your master may assuredly rely of my master's heart to him as of any friend he hath in England" so that if the king's Highness will send any one into Flanders [to confer with Pole] I think my master "would be most best content to speak with him than any other".

This last suggestion Pole himself repeats in a letter to Cromwell written three days later. He says "by writing meseemeth we do not understand one another so that to reply more in this manner I see no point", suggests that learned persons from the king should meet him in Flanders, "and glad I would, if it might be that you

¹ *Nine Historical Letters*, etc., privately printed for J. P. C. (John Payne Collier), London, 1871; *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII.*, IX., No. 701.

might be one of them for you pretending [the word had not yet acquired the sinister meaning of falsely putting forward] that affection to the King's honour that I no less (and with the greatest) do bear to his grace, if we spoke together, peradventure some better ways might be taken than can ever be brought to pass by writing; wherein there will never be that end that both would desire."¹ If Pole believed that Cromwell had degenerated into the nature of a devil and was the minister of Satan, preaching the overthrow of all foundations of right and wrong out of a book written by the finger of Satan himself in order to confirm Henry in the career of Anti-christ, these are extraordinary messages for a cardinal of the church to send and write to him.

Pole, unaware that Cromwell knew by advices from Rome and the French king that the object of his mission to Flanders had been to aid the insurrection in England,² had steadily denied any rebellious intentions. In his letter to Cromwell of May 2, 1537,³ he says the king's demand for his surrender as a rebel was caused by "the sinister and false report of others that, by false conjectures of things they knew not, had ill informed the king of my purpose in coming to these parts" But the rebellion he had hoped to aid was extinguished. He thought himself in danger of assassination. He was in danger of being trappanned and taken to England, as in 1529 Charles V. had seized and carried off from the very shadow of the Vatican a priest who had appealed from his authority to Rome.⁴ What he wrote to the pope was true enough. Ready as he might be to die if it could profit the church, his death now would only be to her dishonor. Having permission to withdraw, he determined to leave Flanders secretly. Throgmorton wrote a letter⁵ on August 20, insinuating that if Pole returned to Rome without obtaining some concession from the king about the papal authority, his book

¹ This letter, printed in full in *Nine Historical Letters*, privately printed for J. P. C. (John Payne Collier), is not calendared. The following letter explains its omission:

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE, 1st August 1902

Mr. Paul van Dyke

Dear Sir.

The letter from Pole to Cromwell 16 Feb. (1537), to which you refer is in this office but the abstract of it was accidentally omitted from the Calendar for the year 1537. The nine letters are all undoubtedly genuine.

I remain

Yours faithfully

R. H. BRODIE

² See reference, page 703 of this article.

³ *Nine Historical Letters*, etc.; *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII.*, XII., Part I., No. 1123.

⁴ *Journal d'un Bourgeois de Paris sous le Règne de François I^{er}*, publié par M. L. Lalanne, Société de l'Histoire de France, 1854, 403.

⁵ *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII.*, XII., Part II., No. 552.

would be printed and the excommunication launched. The threat was repeated September 2 in the suggestion made to the English agent in Flanders,¹ that, if the king wished to stop such things as were likely to be put forth shortly in Rome, he should send at once to Pole.

This attempt to frighten Henry by the threat of publishing papal censures calling on all Christians to drive him from his throne, supported by a book denouncing civil war and appealing for foreign invasion, received as sharp an answer as one with real knowledge of human nature would expect. Two commissioners, one named by Pole himself, were appointed to go to Pole with the demand that he lay aside his claim to represent the incarnate justice of God sitting in judgment on the sins of the king of England, or abide the issue which that claim made inevitable.² The time of threats was past. Cromwell, playing his game to destroy in England the political power of the clergy, who in Pole's opinion were able to appeal for support to a college of cardinals mainly composed of Italians, Frenchmen, and Spaniards who believed themselves appointed to speak the divine judgments to all peoples of the earth, forced his adversary to show his hand—a hand which Pole thought contained infamy for Henry, serious danger of insurrection at home, and the imminent possibility of foreign invasion. But Pole, without waiting for the arrival of the commission he had asked for, was already on his way to Rome,³ having started August 22; Throgmorton, as he afterward boasted, had tricked Cromwell;⁴ and Cromwell answers this threat of publishing the book and loosing the anathemas of the church to provoke rebellion and invasion by a letter defying Pole and the pope. "You have bleared my eye once", he writes to Throgmorton, "you shall not again." He threatens Pole with the most brutal agencies known to contemporary politics—assassination and proscription of his family.⁵ Then Pole began to see in Crom-

¹ *Ibid.*, No. 635.

² *Ibid.*, Nos. 619, 620.

³ *Ibid.*, Nos. 559, 598, 725.

⁴ He had left England to return to Pole, telling Cromwell that if he could not persuade Pole to resign the cardinal's hat and resume allegiance to the king, he would desert Pole's service.

⁵ In regard to these two letters from Cromwell, one sending commissioners, the other threats and defiance, Mr. Gairdner seems to have fallen into a slight error, a thing very unusual for that distinguished scholar. He says in the preface to Volume XII., Part II., xxxvi, "In short the King . . . had entertained the idea of sending some one to confer with Pole . . . [but] had on second thoughts resolved to cast aside all decency and distinctly threaten", etc. No. 725, a letter from Hutton, shows that Cromwell's letter No. 619, promising to send the commissioners asked for by Pole, had been forwarded to Throgmorton, but that Pole and Throgmorton had already gone to Italy without waiting to receive it, the letter of Throgmorton not being delivered to Hut-

well what he had never seen before—the agent of Satan for hardening Henry in the career of Antichrist.

The words “had never seen before” are used advisedly. Not only are Pole’s letters to Cromwell up to the beginning of 1537 inconsistent with a belief on his part that Cromwell had become a devil and was the instrument of Satan hardening Henry in crime, but in 1536 he wrote an altogether different account of the agent of Satan in that persuasion. When he had been asked to reply to the question whether the supremacy of the pope had been established by God, a book by Richard Sampson¹ against the papal supremacy had been sent to him that he might consider its arguments. Pole’s answer to the question, as already related, took the form of the book *Pro Ecclesiasticæ Unitatis Defensione*. He says,² addressing Henry, “God permitted Satan to come to you and persuade you that you would increase your glory by taking the name supreme head of the church.” “But how did Satan persuade you to this? Why should we ask how, when we have the book of Sampson, who was the instrument of Satan to persuade you to do it? Is anything hidden which Sampson and the other instruments of Satan said in thy ears, since they have been willing to commit it to writing?” Now if in 1536, when he wrote these words, Pole had been certain that Cromwell had come straight from Satan to Henry—he says in the *Apologia* (1539), “I knew who sent him and I knew the message he brought”—as the special emissary of the devil to persuade Henry to take the title supreme head of the church, and that Cromwell had done it by arguments drawn from the book of Machiavelli, it is psychologically very hard to believe that while speaking of those implements of Satan, Sampson and Sampson’s book, Pole should not have mentioned either Cromwell or Machiavelli’s book. But neither Cromwell nor Machiavelli is mentioned either here or anywhere else in the *Pro Ecclesiasticæ Unitatis Defensione*.

Having shown that up to February of 1537 Pole did not regard Cromwell as possessed of a legion of devils nor as preaching Satan’s Bible, *Il Principe*, the next question would be, When did Pole first ton until twelve days after date (No. 635). It was after receiving this note from Hutton, telling him that Pole and Throgmorton had gone on without waiting and that there was no use in sending commissioners, that Cromwell wrote No. 795. In spite of this threat, there is nothing to show that any attempt was made to assassinate Pole. One instance where Pole was afraid of a certain man, which is cited in the preface of a volume of the *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII.* as a proof of the attempt, is shown by documents in the volume to be a mistake. The supposed murderer was at the time trying to get pardon and employment from the king. An attempt was made to trapan Pole, bring him to England, and execute him, but Henry refused Wyatt’s offer to have him assassinated.

¹ *Oratio quæ docet hortatur admonet omnes potissimum Anglos regię dignitati cum primis ut obediant*, etc., London, 1533.

² Ingolstadt edition, Book III. 401.

read Machiavelli, and so finding out, as he says, the principles of his action, discover Cromwell's devilish nature? For direct evidence on this question I have searched in vain Pole's correspondence and that of his friends. In his extant writings to 1540, so far as printed, Pole does not mention Machiavelli except in the *Apologia*. This also is a strange thing, if he knew for years before he wrote the *Apologia* that Cromwell was responsible for the sins of Henry, that Machiavelli and the devil were responsible for Cromwell's advice. The omission is not however conclusive, for some of Pole's letters may be lost.

But it is a fact that, so far as we know, the only time that Pole alluded to Machiavelli's influence before he wrote the *Apologia* was in March, 1538. This was not long after a trip to Florence (February or March, 1538),¹ where, as he tells us in the *Apologia*, he discussed Machiavelli's doctrines, and not long before he began the *Apologia*. A record of this conversation has been preserved in a curious way. John a Legh, a traveler to many lands, who had spent some years in Italy and had been conversant with Pole, returned to England in 1540. He was arrested and put in the Tower for examination. A deposition giving an account of his intercourse with Pole has survived.² He writes that at a dinner given at the time when Pole, as head of the English Hospital at Rome, made a certain Hillyear master and a certain Goldwell custos, Pole talked about the sacrilege of the English king in "pulling Thomas of Canterbury from his shrine". He then asked "what stories I had read in the Italian tongue". I answered that as yet I had no leisure but on going home I would get some and read them. He warned me against reading "the story of Nicolo Matchauello, which had already poisoned England and would poison all Christendom, and said he would do all he could to cause it 'to be dystynkyd and put down howt off remberans'". This conversation could not have taken place before March, 1538.³

¹ I have been able to date this visit to Florence by a process too long to be described in a note, but apparently certain in its result. Mr. L. A. Burd, in his admirable edition of *Il Principe* (Oxford, 1891), dates the passage of the *Apologia* that tells of discussing Machiavelli in Florence, 1534 (p. 37). He is doubtless misled by the idea that the *Apologia*, being a preface to the *Pro Unitatis Defensione*, was written when it was published, and he follows Grässe (*vers* 1536) and Brunel (*circa* 1536) for the publication. Professor Villari in his *Machiavelli* does the same thing. As already shown, page 700, the publication was in 1539. If, as seems probable, the *Apologia* was finished in the spring or summer of 1539, "superiore hyeme" would mean the winter of 1538 (Pole's usage often includes in "winter" the first month of spring and the last of autumn).

² *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII.*, XV., No. 721.

³ This is established by information kindly furnished by the head of the English College at Rome, which is the successor and literary heir of the English Hospital. All

Another strange chance has preserved to us a record of the fact that one of Cromwell's intimate friends, Lord Morley, a man who had frequently engaged with him in literary conversation and more particularly in conversation about Florence (see passages in his letter), sent him in the beginning of 1539¹ a volume containing the *Florentine Histories* and the *Prince* of Machiavelli as something which Cromwell had never seen before. Now if Pole explicitly asserted that Cromwell had Machiavelli before 1539, and Lord Morley early in 1539 sent Cromwell the book as a novelty, the very strong probability would be that Pole was mistaken and Lord Morley right; for Pole had talked with Cromwell only once in his life, and Morley had often talked intimately with him on politics and literature. But the reader must again be reminded that Pole does not say that Cromwell had Machiavelli at any given time. He records an old conversation with Cromwell and says that "afterward" he found out that he was a close student of Machiavelli. The conclusive reasons for believing that "afterward" must carry us on at least to March, 1537, have been given from Pole's own writings. What is more reasonable than to believe that in the spring of 1539 Pole had heard from his sympathizers in England that Cromwell was discussing with keen interest the book sent him by Lord Morley, and that in the *Apologia*, which Pole was finishing at that time, he should combine with an attack on Cromwell and Henry the fulfilment of the resolution expressed the preceding spring, which John a Legh naïvely reported as a plan to cause "Nicolo Matchauello" to be everywhere "dystynkyd and put down" out of all remembrance?

Besides this special line of investigation, many instances might be cited to show that the judgments of the *Apologia* are not those of a historian, but of a polemic, writing out of a mood the very honesty of whose intense zeal makes his work untrustworthy. Before doing so, it is well to recall that a partizan bias in forming moral judgments was common to the age. An intense partizan is apt, often unconsciously, to judge an opponent of his cause far more severely than a supporter of it; and the working of this natural tendency can be seen nowhere more plainly than among the judgments upon the morality of actions uttered by men of the sixteenth century. Documents relating to these appointments were not found, and current statements about them are probably confused, but an index of documents which was found mentions a papal letter of March, 1538, appointing Cardinal Reginald Pole head of the Hospital.

¹ Sir Henry Ellis, who printed this letter in full (*Original Letters*, Third Series, III. 63) dated it 1537. It is dated only February 13. The editors of the *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII.* (XIV., Part I., No. 285) have assigned it to 1539, for good reasons, which may be traced in Volume XIV. If it were written in 1537, it would make no great difference to the reasoning of this article.

century. The delinquencies of the princes who embraced Lutheranism bulk smaller in the pamphlets of Lutheran divines than those of Roman Catholic princes. Huguenot writings or speeches at the time of the civil wars are apt to paint in vivid colors the atrocities of Roman Catholic soldiers. They seldom emphasize strongly the savage deeds of Huguenot partizan bands. And to Pole, as to most men of his time, circumstances unconsciously to himself altered cases.

According to the method pursued in this article, his tendency to suffer his moral judgments to be altered by circumstances will first be illustrated by an instance taken from his writings outside the *Apologia*. Damianus a Goes, writing to Pole, spoke of the great ingratitude of Richard Morison, who, after being supported by Pole at Venice, had repaid his benefits by controversial attacks. Now this was precisely the charge his enemies made against Pole. He had been supported as a student on a royal pension for years and had used his learning against the king. Pole answered with unquestionable sincerity that he had done so for conscience sake. It never seemed to occur to him that there was any possibility of force in Morison's plea that he had stood by the king against his former benefactor for conscience sake. He answers Damianus a Goes: "Concerning what you write about Morison, you rightly detest his ungrateful soul. The vice of ingratitude is a very summary of evil. But if he has been so ungrateful to God, what wonder that he has been so ungrateful to me?" No one with any knowledge of human nature would see in this a proof of insincerity. It only expresses a tendency common to all partizans, intensified in the death-struggle of opposing ideals in the sixteenth century. When Protestant Elizabeth ascended the throne, John Knox was not so positive as he had been under Roman Catholic Mary in asserting that the rule of a woman was against the laws of God and nature. When the Huguenot Henry of Navarre came into sight as the legitimate heir of the throne of France, Huguenot controversialists began to feel the power of the divine right of kings, and Jesuit writers began to see new force in arguments for the supremacy of the people.

A very slight examination of the *Apologia* makes evident the fact that Pole's moral judgments are tremendously swayed by his partizan religious sympathies.¹ For instance, he denounces in the most unmeasured terms the lustfulness of Henry VIII. Most courts at that time were bad places, and Henry's was not one of the best. But it is hard to see that Henry was a more licentious man than

¹ The writer here intends no defense of Henry. He is only suggesting a method of testing the accuracy of Pole's judgment that Henry's deeds display a *unique* atrocity of lust and cruelty.

James V. of Scotland. James had illegitimate children by six different mothers, four of them being daughters of noblemen of his court. Pole could hardly have been unaware of this, for several of these children held important ecclesiastical benefices conferred at Rome. Yet, in his letters to James, Pole addresses him in terms of unbounded admiration: "You set yourself forth as the strenuous minister of Christ's piety", "The noble offspring of pious kings, the constancy of whose piety you repeat in all things."

The conclusion is inevitable that the judgment expressed upon the *unique* and *unexampled* licentiousness of Henry in the denunciation of the *Apologia* is probably unconsciously based upon the fact that Henry's passion for Anne Boleyn was the chief cause which led him to deny the papal supremacy. Pole would evidently have agreed with Sanders, who wrote in *The Rise and Growth of the Anglican Schism*,¹ "The royal household consisted of men utterly abandoned, gamblers, adulterers, panderers, swindlers, false swearers, blasphemers, extortioners and even heretics".

Pole's judgment upon the unexampled cruelty of Henry is evidently inspired by the fact that its victims were largely supporters of the old relation of England to the papacy. Henry shed more noble blood, but he did not put to death more people than several other rulers of his age. In the year 1534, when Pole was writing the *Pro Unitatis Defensione*, which denounced Henry as guilty of inhumanity unmatched in history, Francis I., whose character Pole praises, burnt twenty-three Lutherans in Paris, presiding at the execution of six who were dipped in the *balançoire*, a machine which swung them up and down in the flame in order to prolong the death-struggle. Pole could scarcely have been ignorant of this.

Pole rebukes in the severest terms the cruelty of Henry's punishment of the northern rebellion which centered round the Pilgrimage of Grace. He has no word of blame for the comparatively greater severity of Mary in executing about one hundred for Wyatt's rebellion. He denounces the execution of More and Fisher as deeds worse than those of Nero and Domitian. It was a savage act; but when Pole was head of the English church and chief councilor of the throne, to whom Philip had solemnly committed the care of his wife and kingdom, he expressly approved a deed which from the modern point of view was, like the execution of More and Fisher, an act of savage and superfluous cruelty. In a letter to Philip he reports with full approval² the burning of Latimer and Ridley. And if, during those three years of Mary's rule whose

¹ Edition by David Lewis, London, Burns and Oates, 1877, 24.

² *Poli Epistola*, V. 84.

record of executions cannot be matched during the entire reign of Henry, Pole used his authority as head of the English church or his influence as chief councilor of the throne to save any one from death, no record of it has survived. He had for Mary's conduct and character nothing but the fullest praise. These observations do not imply the least doubt of the sincerity of Pole's denunciations of the crimes of Henry, nor question the entire honesty of his approval of the punishment of the two to three hundred heretics burnt by Mary. They simply illustrate the fact that the controversial writers of the sixteenth century used words like cruelty and wickedness from a standpoint of moral judgment which would be assumed by very few men of to-day, whether Roman Catholics or dissidents from the ancient church. And the *Apologia* of Pole in purpose, tone, language, and judgment is one of the most violently polemic writings of the century.

The writer ventures to suggest, in view of the foregoing examination, that there is far more reason for rejecting Pole's portrait of Cromwell in the *Apologia* than the portrait of Cromwell in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, now very properly set aside by modern writers as one-sided. The true portrait of Thomas Cromwell is to be made out of the positive record of his acts. And he ought to be judged by his own ideals, not by ideals he rejected. Over seven thousand letters and papers relating to him have been calendared. The inaccurate memories of his bitterest enemy should no longer distort their interpretation. Thomas Cromwell was no "Martyr of the Gospel". But the diabolically inspired disciple of Machiavelli is a creation of the excited imagination of Pole. And the mysteriously sinister atmosphere which modern writers have borrowed from Pole to throw around their portraits of one of the most capable of English statesmen is not the light of history.

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